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The U.S. Military and the Philippines after  
11 September 2001:  
Why Size, Reform, and Goodwill Still Matter

## **Abstract**

### **THE U.S. MILITARY AND THE PHILIPPINES AFTER 11 SEPTEMBER 2001: WHY SIZE, REFORM AND GOODWILL STILL MATTER**

The paper proposes that USPACOM can support a successful counterinsurgency in the Philippines by following a humble, discerning, and patient plan that highlights three lessons learned from the U.S. counterinsurgency effort in El Salvador. These lessons are: (1) a smaller military presence is better, (2) a reform-minded host government is necessary, and (3) goodwill, rather than military defeat of the insurgents, is the most effective goal. Each lesson recognizes that internal, rather than external, forces warrant U.S. military attention.

This approach is significant because it (1) appreciates the subtle and not-so-subtle differences between principles of MOOTW and the principles of war, (2) highlights the importance of shaping the environment, and (3) recognizes that treating the insurgency in the Philippines as a Jihad-inspired revolution is simplistic and a detraction from real root causes.

It's easy to claim that the war on terrorism is unlike any war that America has fought. It's also dead wrong. America has a habit of becoming involved in other people's civil wars. What is different is how she got into this one and how she plans to get out of it. Moreover, America has done rather well when she's been able to figure out these things; when she hasn't the result has been rather dreary, regardless of the resources she has committed.

Serge C. Bertrand

## **Introduction**

The events of September 11th changed U.S. national security strategy. In a matter of hours the world became smaller and more dangerous. The new administration, vowing to do all it could to prevent future terrorist attacks, adopted a more proactive national security strategy. Nonetheless, lessons learned prior to September 11<sup>th</sup> are relevant to efforts within the "war on terrorism."<sup>i</sup> These lessons are perhaps most applicable to military operations other than war (MOOTW). One such effort is U.S. counterinsurgency support for the Philippines where Commander, US Pacific Command (USPACOM) is faced with a familiar problem of insurgents making life difficult for an ally.

This paper proposes that USPACOM support Manila by following a humble, discerning, and patient plan that highlights three lessons learned from the U.S. counterinsurgency effort in El Salvador.<sup>ii</sup> These lessons are: (1) a smaller military presence is better, (2) a reform-minded host government is necessary, and (3) goodwill, rather than military defeat of the insurgents, is the most effective goal. Each lesson recognizes that internal, rather than external, forces warrant U.S. military attention.

First, a brief review of the U.S.-led counterinsurgency effort in El Salvador during the 1980s is presented. Second, three lessons learned from the Salvadorian experience are introduced. Third, the current situation in the Philippines is discussed. Finally, the lessons learned in El Salvador are applied to the Philippines. This approach is significant because it (1)

appreciates subtle and not-so-subtle differences between principles of MOOTW and the principles of war, (2) highlights the importance of shaping the environment, and (3) recognizes that treating the insurgency in the Philippines as a Jihad-inspired revolution is simplistic and a detraction from real root causes. Appendix A is a list of principles of MOOTW and principles of war. Appendix B is a notional framework for USPACOM's Theater Security Cooperation Plan for the Philippines.

## **Analysis**

### El Salvador Review

In 1979, El Salvador is fragmented due to extremes at both ends of the spectrum. Socially, the numerous Salvadoran poor have minimal services: 60 percent of the population has no access to piped water and 80 percent of the population has no sewage.<sup>iii</sup> Racism against Indians and "mixed bloods" is widespread, aggravated by a Salvadoran culture predisposed to violence and machismo.<sup>iv</sup> Economically, years of steady growth and stable prices are overshadowed by dramatic shifts from rural to urban environments.<sup>v</sup> Inequitable distribution of land represents the greatest imbalance: census data shows that 1,000 farms control 35 percent of the land and 185,000 farms control 17 percent of the land.<sup>vi</sup> The elite controlled agriculture accounts for 60 percent of the labor force and 90 percent of El Salvador's foreign exchange.<sup>vii</sup> The elite families live in beautiful homes, travel, and educate their children abroad while the poor live in stick and adobe shanties in gullies that separate the neighborhoods of the elite.<sup>viii</sup> The poor see how the rich live, but have no path available to join them. There is no meaningful middle class. The dreams of the poor are unfulfilled.

With this backdrop, reform minded military officers take action. The military ousts the elected president, General Romero, and forms a Junta.<sup>ix</sup> The El Salvadoran insurgents use the

coup to spark their cause. From the countryside the guerillas begin an economic, military and psychological campaign that lasts 12 years with various levels of success while the Salvadoran government receives various levels of support from the United States. The insurgency ends with a comprehensive peace treaty on 16 January 1992.<sup>x</sup> In the end, victory requires the counterinsurgency to address the real problem: selfish elite.<sup>xi</sup> U.S. patience pays off with each of its original policy goals fulfilled: (1) an ally is supported, (2) a democracy is promoted, and (3) another Cuba is prevented.<sup>xii</sup> Next, El Salvador lessons learned are presented.

### El Salvador Lessons Learned

The U.S. experience in El Salvador includes numerous lessons learned. The following three, although not exhaustive, are noteworthy: (1) a smaller military presence is better, (2) a reform-minded host government is necessary, and (3) goodwill, rather than military defeat of the insurgents, is the most effective goal.

#### Smaller is Better

The first principle, smaller is better, is the most basic.<sup>xiii</sup> A large U.S. military contribution, by its very presence, changes the balance of power between the host country and the United States because the host country becomes dependent on the United States. There is a resultant disincentive for the host country to develop and implement resolutions to the festering causes of internal discontent.<sup>xiv</sup> In El Salvador, the United States quickly leveled with the host government by highlighting that combat troops were not an option. U.S. military leaders were cautious and realistic. The U.S. Army Chief of Staff stated that “the problems of Central America are so dependent on local leaders that I wouldn’t even know how to design a military solution.”<sup>xv</sup> The Joint Chief of Staff stated “neither I, nor any member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and civilian

leaders in the Department of Defense advocate introducing U.S. combat forces to try to implement an American military solution to the problems in Central America.”<sup>xvi</sup>

Fewer troops also make it harder for the insurgents to suggest that the host government lacks legitimacy by depicting it as a U.S. puppet.<sup>xvii</sup> Small units are also more useful in counterinsurgencies because the hearts and minds of the population are the “key terrain.” In order to secure this key terrain, the military needs to interact with the undecided population, on patrol and in small numbers.<sup>xviii</sup> In the end, the United States was able to keep the fight a Salvadoran effort. Rather than overwhelming the Salvadoran government, like the United States did in Vietnam, the U.S. military did all it could to empower the Salvadoran military and government.<sup>xix</sup> This success demonstrates that deliberate underutilization of military power can work.<sup>xx</sup>

### Promote Reform

The second principle is a need for the host government to appreciate the root causes of the insurgency and corresponding requirement for reform. Unfortunately, root causes are not always understood. An expert on U.S. military involvement in El Salvador, Professor John D. Waghelstein, describes this well by recounting that in 1976 then-Minister of Defense General Romero<sup>xxi</sup> said: “[i]f it weren’t for outside Communist agitators, there wouldn’t be any problem in El Salvador.”<sup>xxii</sup> On his return flight from El Salvador, Waghelstein knew that El Salvador was in trouble.<sup>xxiii</sup> The most dangerous oversimplification of the El Salvador insurgency was that it was a “Communist inspired revolution.”<sup>xxiv</sup> The truth is that the insurgency was “frustration inspired” rather than “communist inspired.”<sup>xxv</sup>

Although misery needs a catalyst, and the catalyst in El Salvador was a group of individuals that strongly believed communist doctrine, misery was the root cause of the

discontent in El Salvador.<sup>xxvi</sup> Without the underlying misery, the communist insurgents could not recruit uncommitted members of the population. The insurgents did receive material and ideological support from the world-wide communist movement; however, the relevant issue is what came first, the external revolutionary exploitation or internal discontent. Economic and social misery existed well before communists arrived in El Salvador. This misery made El Salvador ripe for any new ideas. Pointing the finger outward, as General Romero did, resulted in a focus and effort away from the populations' misery. Until the misery was addressed with reform, government success in El Salvador was handicapped and the uncommitted joined the insurgency.<sup>xxvii</sup>

### Build Goodwill

The third principle is that the creation of goodwill, rather than military defeat of the insurgents, is the most effective goal. On 1 February 1990, then-Secretary of State James A. Baker told Congress: "[w]e believe this is the year to end the war through a negotiated settlement which guarantees safe political space for all Salvadorans."<sup>xxviii</sup> This watershed remark dropped the requirement for the defeat of the insurgents and set the stage for a negotiated settlement.<sup>xxix</sup> One author has suggested that the United States should require any host government asking for counterinsurgency support to recognize that a negotiated settlement is the only alternative.<sup>xxx</sup>

The key to this type of victory is getting the population to trust the host government. The path to trust is building host government goodwill. The host government must demonstrate that the population and insurgents can trust them to fulfill their needs. The first step is going out into the community and finding out what the population wants.<sup>xxxi</sup> However, reform for reform's sake is not enough.<sup>xxxii</sup> Although reform can help foster goodwill, the creation of trust and resultant goodwill are a required precursor to successful reform. The population's allegiance to



the host government is the ultimate long-term effect of goodwill. The host government must appreciate the population's needs and the population must trust that the host government can deliver. Both take time.<sup>xxxiii</sup> One influential writer, Peter Liotta, cogently states “[i]f nothing else, Vietnam (and Somalia) should have taught us to pay attention to the nuances locals pay attention to, and what it is they seek....unless policymakers understand why, how, when, and where specific sets of individuals distrust one another, a quagmire-of our own making-will devolve.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> Next, the Philippines environment is introduced.

### The Philippines

U.S. troops are on their way back to the Philippines. The task is primarily the same, to help defeat an Islamic extremist terrorist group that operates out of southern Philippines, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).<sup>xxxv</sup> The United States plans to deploy more than the approximately 3,000 troops used last year and leave them there longer.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Meanwhile, U.S. troops in the Philippines remain a divisive issue for many in the Philippines.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The following is a brief history of the conflict in southern Philippines.

The southern Philippine island of Mindanao is the heartland of the Philippine Islamic community that was started by Arab merchants during the sixteenth century.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Spanish attempts to impose Christianity throughout the southern archipelago were unsuccessful.<sup>xxxix</sup> The Spaniards viewed the Moros (they called the Muslims “Moros” after the Moroccan “Moors”) as “cruel, cunning and treacherous raiders and slavers” and the Moros viewed Christians as “land thieves, bullies and cowards who were changing their way of life.”<sup>xl</sup> The U.S. involvement against the Moros began in 1899 when 80 U.S. Marines landed on the island of Jolo.<sup>xli</sup> The Americans adopted the Spaniard's opinion of the Moros.<sup>xlii</sup> Although the Moros suffered

military and political setbacks, particularly the failed Huk insurgency in the 1950s, they never accepted rule from Manila.<sup>xliii</sup>

The modern day Moros community is characterized by (1) a resentment of Catholic transmigration, (2) a view of Manila's secular society as illegitimate, and (3) poor economic development.<sup>xliv</sup> Muslims in southern Philippines believe Manila ignores their needs and promotes Christian encroachment on their ancestral land and culture.<sup>xlv</sup>

The Philippine experience with modern Islamic fundamentalism is traceable to the formation of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1971. A cease-fire between the MNLF and then-President Ramos culminated in the 1996 Davao Consensus.<sup>xlvi</sup> The peace treaty's centerpiece was a limited Muslim enclave in southern Philippines.<sup>xlvii</sup> The MNLF integrated into the mainstream society after the 1996 Davao Consensus.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) became the primary secessionist movement after the 1996 Davao Consensus.<sup>xlviii</sup> MILF, a splinter group from MNLF dating back to 1980, rejected the Davao Consensus because it failed to satisfy aspirations for a completely free Islamic state.<sup>xlix</sup> The MILF entered into cease fire negotiations with Manila on several occasions and even signed a cease-fire agreement; however, neither side has kept the peace.<sup>1</sup> Negotiations continue.<sup>li</sup>

MILF's perceived moderation enhances the militant role of ASG. Its origin is traceable to 1989. Its original leaders fought with the International Islamic brigade against the Soviets in Afghanistan.<sup>lii</sup> ASG's overall objective is an Islamic Theocratic State in Mindanao and it is adamantly opposed to co-existence with Christians.<sup>liii</sup> ASG raises money from criminal activity including kidnapping, extortion, and marijuana cultivation and, allegedly, from overseas financiers such as Osama Bin Laden (OBL).<sup>liv</sup> ASG is notorious for indiscriminate, deadly

violence against Christians.<sup>lv</sup> Fearful that a separate peace between MILF and the Philippines could marginalize them, ASG made an unprecedented peace overture in 1998.<sup>lvi</sup>

Economically, the Philippines is not advanced, in part due to political turmoil.<sup>lvii</sup> Forty-five percent of the Philippine population's livelihood is dependent on agriculture.<sup>lviii</sup> The 1997 Asia financial crisis hit the Philippine standard of living hard, by 2002 the number below the poverty line rose to 40 percent.<sup>lix</sup> Economic conditions in southern Philippines are the most desperate. Ironically, supporting ASG's kidnapping plots appears to represent the only way out of extreme poverty for young people in the south since ASG pays them handsomely for guarding hostages.<sup>lx</sup> Otherwise, the dreams of the poor in southern Philippines are unfulfilled. Global Trends 2015 predicts "communal tension and minority issues" in the Philippines will continue to represent a challenge to U.S. policymakers.<sup>lxi</sup> Next, a comparison of the two environments, El Salvador in the 1980s and the Philippines in 2003, is presented.

#### 1980s El Salvador and 2003 Philippines: a Comparison

USPACOM faces an insurgency in the Philippines that shares a strategic center of gravity with the insurgency in El Salvador 20 years ago: the uncommitted population. This similarity is due to comparable environments. Although El Salvador in the 1980s pre-dates the widespread adoption of "globalization" to describe the international arena, one such vision, "pernicious globalization,"<sup>lxii</sup> applies to both El Salvador of the 1980s and southern Philippines of 2003. The attributes of pernicious globalization exist in both environments: (1) neither population benefits from globalization and both remain relatively poor, (2) population growth and resource scarcity are aggravating circumstances, (3) technologies not only fail to address deficiencies, but also are exploited by insurgents, and (4) governance and political leadership are relatively weak. A more detailed comparison of the two environments follows.

Both environments allow an external catalyst, communism in El Salvador and radical Islam in the Philippines, to exploit social, economic, and political misery. Although neither external force can gain sustained success without these miseries, the external force is able to exploit discontent by highlighting its existence and promising to correct imbalances. External forces also aggravate efforts to address the needs of the population. Reform efforts are sidetracked by a desire to neutralize the insurgency.

Each environment also has an agricultural economy. This ensures that a vast majority of the population survives at a relatively low standard of living. This reality, when coupled with the ever present upper class, promotes a pervasive feeling of imbalance and inequity that is ripe for exploitation. The absence of a significant middle class means upward mobility is not a realistic alternative. The dreams of the poor in both environments are unfulfilled.

El Salvador and the Philippines are also emerging from political upheaval. The coup in El Salvador corresponds with the rise of the insurgency. The insurgency grows during a period of considerable national and international upheaval regarding the legitimacy of El Salvador's government. Although more distant in time, the Philippine political system is shocked by the fall of the Marcos regime prior. In a less dramatic, but still relevant fashion, the resignation of President Estrada demonstrates both the strength and relative fragility of the Philippine government.<sup>lxiii</sup>

Lastly, each environment shares internal prejudices among their respective populations. In El Salvador, there is racism against Indians and mixed bloods. A racism that helps the insurgents recruit both Indians and mixed bloods. In the Philippines, there is prejudice feed hatred between Muslims and Catholics. These deep-seated prejudices detract from attempts to negotiate compromises. An associated problem is high levels of violence in both environments.

The violent nature of the communist insurgents, El Salvadoran government death squads, and a growing list of atrocities perpetrated by ASG are well documented. Next, the lessons learned from El Salvador are applied to the Philippines.

### **Application**

#### The Combatant Commander and the Philippines 2003

On 20 November 2001, U.S. President George Bush and Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arrayo met in Washington D.C. Well within the wake of the September 11 attacks, the presidents pledged “military cooperation to end the terrorist activities of ASG” and agreed that peace in southern Philippines “requires addressing Mindanao’s root economic and social problems.”<sup>lxiv</sup> What should USPACOM do about this volatile situation with longstanding historical roots and no quick end in sight?

#### Smaller is Better

USPACOM should realize that a small military presence is preferable to a larger one. Up until the recent U.S. military success in Afghanistan and Iraq, the notion that smaller is better remained inconsistent with much of military doctrine.<sup>lxv</sup> Nonetheless, smaller is better when it comes to the Philippines as it was in El Salvador. A smaller force that emphasizes noncombatant capabilities over combatant capabilities prevents several potential problems.

First, at a very pragmatic level, a smaller force diminishes the potential for large numbers of fatalities and the resultant effect on U.S. resolve to continue the counterinsurgency effort.<sup>lxvi</sup> A smaller force is also more realistic in these days of high demand for U.S. military personnel.

Second, a smaller force is less likely to inflame the passions of the Philippine populace that is against U.S. military presence.<sup>lxvii</sup> Large troop movements, heavy armor rolling through

villages, and ever present U.S. military air traffic lend support to elements that are troubled by the U.S. military presence and could trigger significant domestic unrest. Such an overt and large presence may not only doom the current Manila government, but also decrease the likelihood of cooperation from Manila for U.S. policies in the future.<sup>lxviii</sup>

Third, a smaller presence decreases the ability of the insurgents to paint the Manila government as a lackey of the U.S. government. The larger the U.S. presence the more likely it is that the insurgents can create the perception that Manila is simply carrying out orders from Washington D.C. Whether or not this is true is irrelevant since the perception in the minds of the population, from the insurgent's perspective, is all that matters. The population's perception that Manila is following orders will become the population's reality with adverse consequences for Manila and Washington D.C.

Fourth, a smaller force makes it clear that the United States does not intend to take over the struggle. It is important that the struggle remains one between the Philippine government and the insurgents since only the Philippine government can successfully address the root causes of discontent. The United States cannot solve a dispute between the Philippine government and its Muslim population.

A small force also affords a better vehicle to support reform. Reform, or simply getting better at meeting the needs of the population, does not require a large military presence. Highly-trained units have a security and communication role, but a large U.S. military presence associated with any reform effort only detracts from the effort because it is important that Manila rather than the U.S. military earns credit for successful reform. The United States wants the uncommitted Muslims to support Manila, not the U.S. military. The relationship between smaller units and goodwill is similar. The best way to enhance goodwill is the smaller and more

agile unit that can travel to different communities to interact with and gain the trust of the population. This in turn will yield useful intelligence and develop long-term relationships. Shocking and awing the population with massive units, heavy hardware, and robust power projection has little, if any, role to play in executing reform and building goodwill.

### Promote Reform

USPACOM should understand that reform is needed in southern Philippines. A good example of successful reform in the Philippines is a recent United States Agency for International Development (USAID) \$4.5 million program that trained 13,000 former MNLF combatants in Mindanao to grow crops, breed fish, and cultivate seaweed for export.<sup>lxi</sup> The following assessment of the program was provided by a beneficiary: “[w]e never tasted the benefits of the peace agreement until we were given help with our livelihood.”<sup>lxx</sup> Lasting peace with the MILF and the ASG needs similar testimonials throughout southern Philippines. The USAID program is a positive example of providing an alternative to the insurgent’s anti-government message and highlights that an interagency effort is required to combat the insurgency.<sup>lxxi</sup> USPACOM should work with all U.S., private, Philippine, and international agencies that share U.S. and Philippine objectives. USPACOM is part of a much larger team.<sup>lxxii</sup> USPACOM needs to recognize the military will normally support other agencies when it comes to reform.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

USPACOM must not fall into the trap of viewing the Philippine situation as a Jihad-inspired insurgency. This “ideology” may represent the catalyst for the insurgency and some ASG leaders are inspired by Jihad; however, USPACOM should stay focused on the root causes of the insurgency.<sup>lxxiv</sup> Preoccupation with OBL’s Jihad detracts from the real key terrain: the

hearts and minds of the uncommitted Muslims. An overemphasis on OBL's Jihad also exaggerates the preferred, relatively minor, role of the U.S. military.

### Goodwill

USPACOM should realize that reforms, absent goodwill, are not enough. Much of the goodwill between the host government and the population has to do with efforts to increase the standard of living of the poor with reforms. However, to make reform effective, the Philippine government must begin establishing goodwill between itself and uncommitted Muslims. Since their allegiance to the government, rather than the insurgency, is the ultimate objective, Manila must convince the uncommitted Muslims that the government is more concerned about their well-being than the insurgents. Eventually, the counterinsurgency effort is ensured success when Manila's goodwill reserve corresponds to a deep well compared to a half-empty pail of insurgent goodwill.

The U.S. military can have a role in this endeavor. Engineering support to villagers can create lasting and positive goodwill. Establishing communication with community leaders and other individuals can have similar consequences. Asking them what they need is a good start. With boots on the ground and a relatively robust logistical tail, USPACOM is in a good position to provide manpower and other resources to support infrastructure development. The value of such endeavors is immeasurable. The long-term positive effect of a small unit of U.S. and Philippine military personnel entering a village and leaving improvements, however small, is far reaching when it comes to intelligence and allegiance. Uncommitted Muslims need to make a decision and benevolent, no strings attached, community improvements can only help tilt the scales toward Manila.



In a similar fashion, USPACOM should realize that the military defeat of the insurgency is not the only answer. For that reason, goodwill between the Philippine government and the insurgents is also crucial. Increasing goodwill, rather than killing insurgents, is a more effective military goal. Along these lines, a program of amnesty, bounties, and rewards is useful.<sup>lxxv</sup> Although killing the enemy is often the easiest alternative, neutralizing the enemy does not necessarily mean killing the enemy. Getting insurgents to turn themselves in often leads to a domino effect based on additional intelligence and a devastating impact on those insurgents that, for the time being, remain in the fight.<sup>lxxvi</sup> Insurgents that surrender or are captured alive have a more significant effect on the overall success of the counterinsurgency effort.

Once the insurgents come into the custody of the Philippine government, it is important that they are treated with dignity and respect for moral, law of war, and practical reasons and U.S. personnel should encourage such treatment. From a practical standpoint, positive treatment is more likely to lead to not only subsequent surrenders and turn-ins, but also intelligence coups. Establishing goodwill early and often will create an atmosphere that promotes a non-violent and lasting end to a longstanding and bitter dispute.

The preference for a negotiated end to the insurgency requires the Philippine government to re-examine its policy not to negotiate with the ASG. Although ASG has perpetrated numerous heinous acts and justice is warranted individually, the door should remain open to a negotiated settlement collectively. Ending the “no negotiation with ASG” position helps isolate the ASG. A successful resolution of the struggle with the MILF via negotiation should remain a high priority, if not for the only reason that a lasting peace with the MILF will also tend to isolate the ASG.

#### Premortem

Not every thesis survives the test of time. One could argue that consequential differences between the El Salvador and Philippine environments severely limit the applications of lessons learned.

First, the war on terrorism and the war on communism are not comparable. The former is an uncompromising struggle with religion at its core and an attack on U.S. soil on its resume, while the latter is a traditional geopolitical struggle for economic and political control or at least the preservation of the status quo. Additionally, even if the different backdrops are not consequential, the El Salvador insurgency only ended after the Cold War imploded. Islamic fundamentalists are inspired by a belief that they are on a mission from Allah. They are not going to give up quietly. The religious nature of the Philippine insurgency ensures that negotiation, reform, and goodwill are hopeless endeavors because the very fabric of Manila's secular society is diametrically opposed to ASG's vision of a theocratic state.

Second, the geography of El Salvador and the Philippines are so different that any comparison is bound to result in misapplication. El Salvador is a small country with porous, but relatively secure, borders while the southern Philippines is archipelagical and littered with thousands of ingress and egress points. This difficulty in controlling what comes in and out of the campaign battlefield severely handicaps any counterinsurgency effort, especially one that relies on soft power. A successful effort requires extensive military presence to control the vast area of southern Philippines.

Third, the grotesque and criminal resume of the ASG makes their movement a criminal matter that demands more than reform and goodwill efforts. Although criminal in nature, its scope is beyond the abilities of Philippine law enforcement. Only the military can ensure that all

ASG members are brought to justice. The most effective role for the U.S. military is to help the Philippine military hunt for ASG members.

Finally, the real U.S. national security interest in the Philippines is the need for a U.S. base to help execute the broader war on terrorism. For the United States, the Philippines is a jumping off point in this larger effort. The United States must train and stage military forces for action in other potential hot spots in Asia.<sup>lxxvii</sup> The Philippines just happens to represent the perfect location for a variety of reasons.<sup>lxxviii</sup> This overriding need requires more than a small military presence in the Philippines.

### Conclusion

What USPACOM needs in the Philippines is a humble, discerning, and patient policy. Humble in the sense that USPACOM accepts the need for a relatively small military presence in a supporting role.<sup>lxxix</sup> Discerning in the sense that USPACOM pays attention to the desires of the population in southern Philippines. Patient in the sense that USPACOM understands establishing goodwill takes time, perhaps decades. In the end, victory will occur after the misery of the uncommitted Muslims in southern Philippines is replaced with a hope of a better life and faith in the ability of Manila to deliver it.

USPACOM should realize that rushing off to combat terrorism in the Philippines will fail without appreciating lessons learned and MOOTW principles. USPACOM's optic needs to assimilate these pre-September 11<sup>th</sup> realities. Although much has changed since September 11<sup>th</sup>, much has also remained the same. President John F. Kennedy was right over 30 years ago when he declared "[t]he ability to change is indispensable; however, the ability to hold onto that which is good is equally indispensable."



## **Notional Theater Security Cooperation Plan for the Philippines**

### **Objective**

Shape Philippine environment within an interagency and collective framework to support (1) U.S. efforts to decrease the potential of attacks on U.S. targets (both at home and abroad), (2) Philippine efforts to neutralize terrorist groups within the Philippines, and (3) Philippine efforts to address Mindanao's root economic and social problems.

### **Security**

Emphasize inherent right of self-defense.

Minimize carrying of visible weapons.

Help advertise bounties, amnesty and rewards.

Enhance and support electronic and human intelligence gathering efforts.

### **Unity of Effort**

Explore and formalize unique interagency arrangements with U.S., Philippine, private, and International agencies.

Mentor the Philippine military officers and enlisted.

Provide technology to the Philippine military.

Provide arms to the Philippine military

Exchange arms with the Philippine military

Enhance Philippine involvement in International Military Education & Training (IMET).

Encourage Philippine government to use bounties, amnesty, and rewards.

Establish robust communication, command, and control capabilities with Philippine military and other officials.

## **Restraint**

Encourage humane treatment of all captured insurgents.

Emphasize disciplined use of force.

Conduct small, below the radar exercises, exercises with Philippine entities.

Use noncombatant forces whenever possible.

Explain to the Philippine government, early and often, that the United States has no intentions of providing significantly large numbers of combat troops to support the counterinsurgency.

## **Perseverance**

Remain sensitive to long-term strategic goals.

Establish and formalize long-term relationships with community and government leaders.

Resist all efforts to suggest and/or communicate that the end of the insurgency is imminent or guaranteed.

Help Philippine government efforts to educate its population that a successful counterinsurgency will require a sustained long-term effort.

## **Legitimacy**

Coordinate and support infrastructure development via engineering exercises.

Visit communities with Philippine military and other Philippine officials.

Encourage Philippine government to pursue reform.

Support Philippine efforts to determine the needs of their population.

Help communicate reform efforts and successes.

Help communicate excesses and atrocities of insurgents.

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<sup>i</sup> The so-called "war on terrorism" does not generally include large scale combat operations usually associated with war. Although the recent "battle" in Iraq resembles a traditional war, since September 11<sup>th</sup>, the majority of efforts in support of the "war on terrorism," including current post-hostility efforts in Iraq and the Afghanistan action in 2001, more closely resemble MOOTW. Additionally the "war" is not really against terrorism, rather against terrorist groups, and their supporters, that threaten U.S. citizens and property.

<sup>ii</sup> Other case studies are relevant to the current Philippines campaign and there are more than three lessons learned from the U.S. Salvadoran experience. However, the selected three lessons learned represent a useful beginning. Additionally, the lessons learned are all consistent with MOOTW principles.

<sup>iii</sup> John Waghelstein, "El Salvador: Observations and Experiences in Counterinsurgency," Study Project, U.S. Army War College (1 January 1985): 9-11.

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<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.: 9-13. The author adds: "The poor in El Salvador are the Indians and mestozos (mixed blood) who lost their communal lands to the predominately white coffee planting oligarchy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The descendants of these Indians, driven by the desperate economic conditions of the Great depression, made up the bulk of the rebels during the Communist-led uprising of the early 1930's. Today, considerable racial suspicion still exists between Indian and mestiz campesinos on one side and the upper echelons of Salvadoran society on the other." Also, personal disagreements are often settled with violence and the carrying of weapons, including machetes, is common even among the elite. Finally, the expectations of machismo; fearlessness, articulate, free with money, and sexually active, all combine to erode family stability and fuel the flames of violence.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.: 13.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid.: 14.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.: 15.

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid.: 14-15.

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid.: 9.

<sup>x</sup> Terry Karl, "El Salvador's Negotiated Revolution," Foreign Affairs, (Spring 1992): 147.

<sup>xi</sup> Waghelstein, *supra* at 3: 32.

<sup>xii</sup> Ibid.: 61.

<sup>xiii</sup> John Waghelstein, "Ruminations of a Pachyderm or What I Learned in the Counterinsurgency Business," Small Wars & Insurgencies, 3 (Winter 1994): 361.

<sup>xiv</sup> An example is Vietnam. The South Vietnam government had no incentive to make necessary political and military reform because of the massive U.S. troop commitment and inevitable perception that the United States was "irrevocably committed to forcibly preventing a Communist victory." Earnest Evans, "El Salvador's Lessons for Future U.S. Interventions," World Affairs, 1 (Summer 1997): 45.

<sup>xv</sup> Ibid.: 46.

<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xvii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xviii</sup> Waghelstein, *supra* note 13: 363.

<sup>xix</sup> The U.S. effort in El Salvador is comparable to the British effort in Oman during the 1970-1975 Dhofar counterinsurgency campaign that found the British never having more than 500 advisors in Oman. Like the United States, the British found that strict limits "not only convinced the host government and military that the British would not save them and they had better undertake the reforms that the British were urging them to implement, but the limits also served to deny the rebels the ability to accuse the Omani government of being a puppet of imperialist and infidel Britain." Evans, *supra* note 14: 46.

<sup>xx</sup> Karl, *supra* note 10: 163.

<sup>xxi</sup> Later El Salvadorian President Romero.

<sup>xxii</sup> Waghelstein, *supra* note 3: xi.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Mark Hamilton, "'COMUSMILGP El Salvador,'" unpublished research paper (November 1992): 1.

<sup>xxv</sup> Ibid.: 11.

<sup>xxvi</sup> John Waghelstein, Professor, U.S. Naval War College, interview by author, 17 April 2003, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

<sup>xxvii</sup> The inaccurate depiction of the real enemy also had the effect of "luring" in U.S. support under somewhat false pretenses. (The Reagan administration was no doubt an eager and willing accomplice given its strong ideological anti-communist predisposition.) Although this miss-diagnosis may have helped to garner U.S. support for the El Salvadoran government, the support also remained mismatched until the U.S. began to direct its attention to the real root causes of the insurgency.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Karl, *supra* note 10: 153.

<sup>xxix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxx</sup> Hamilton, *supra* note 24: 10. Perhaps President Reagan appreciated this when he remarked in 1982 that "regimes planted by bayonets don't take root." Evans, *supra* note 14: 47.

<sup>xxxi</sup> A good example where this did not happen is Vietnam. A researcher, Jeff Rice, traveled to Vietnam and asked farmers and the VC what their concerns were. Both groups said taxes, the draft, and land reform. He asked members of the South Vietnam government the same thing. The government response was 180 degrees out from the previous responses. The government perceived the problem as externally generated and never bothered to ask its people what the real problem was. Waghelstein, *supra* note 26.

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<sup>xxxii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> This was especially true in El Salvador due at least in part to the El Salvador extra judicial “death squads” that killed hundreds every month.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Peter Liotta and Simons, Anna, “Thicker than Water? Kin, Religion, and Conflict in the Balkans,” Parameters (Winter 1998-99): 23.

<sup>xxxv</sup> “Asia: Back to the Jungle; Americans in Philippines,” The Economist (1 March 2003): 41. This time the U.S. effort may also target the “more sophisticated” Jemaah Islamiah terrorist group that allegedly carried out the 2002 Bali bombing. Ibid.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Li Zhigiang, “Philippine Political Situation Disturbed,” Beijing Review (11 March 2002): 2.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Jason Isaacson and Rubenstein, Colin, eds, Islamic Asia (London: Transaction Publishers, 2002) 187.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Ibid. The author adds “coming with deep-seated hatred of Muslims as a result of their own epic struggle for independence from Moorish rule on the Iberian Peninsula, the Spaniards were not prepared to show any respect for, or tolerance of, the separate Islamic community that had begun to emerge in the region.” Nonetheless, by 1900 there were approximately 265,000 Moros on Mindanao and only about 65,000 Christians. David Woolman, “Fighting Islam’s Fierce Moro Warriors,” Military History, 1 (April 2002): 34.

<sup>xl</sup> Ibid.: 35.

<sup>xli</sup> Ibid.: 36. At the time one of the Moros leaders remarked “Americans were like a match box, if you strike one they all go off.”

<sup>xlii</sup> Ibid.: 35.

<sup>xliii</sup> Ibid.: 40. The defeat of the Huk insurgency is a good example of a successful MOOTW. One author highlights this in the following review of the U.S. effort:

The rebellion of the communist Huk insurgents in the Philippines was defeated in a classic, unconventional collaboration by a key American advisor (and his few subordinates) and indigenous leadership in a conflict that both viewed as an internal war, largely without relevant external support. The advisor, Colonel Edward Lansdale, USAF, detailed to the Central Intelligence Agency, formed an effective working partnership with Philippine Secretary of Defense, Ramon Magsaysay, to defeat the Huks by, in so many words, making a better revolution than they could. In this counterinsurgency, conventional combat operations were the adjunct to military civic action (a term coined by Lansdale) and psychological warfare. Equally important was the unity of effort achieved by all the relevant agencies of the Philippine government.

John Fishel, “Little Wars, Small Wars, LIC, OOTW, the Gap, and Things that Go Bump in the Night,” Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement, 3 (Winter 1995): 384.

<sup>xliv</sup> Isaacson, supra note 38: 190. The Moros are currently a minority in their own homeland of southern Philippines. In 1975, 6 million of Mindanao’s 9.7 million had their origins in Christian dominated regions. Ibid.: 188. This ratio is significant, especially compared to the mix by 1900: 265,000 Moros and 65,000 Christians. Woolman, supra note 39: 35.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Paul Rodell, Culture and Customs of the Philippines (London: Greenwood Press, 2002): 7. The author adds “[t]he Muslim population is divided into five ethnic subgroups, including the boat-dwelling Badjaos, who rarely set foot on land; the Tausugs of the Sulu archipelago, who have a well-deserved reputation for fighting prowess; the Samal of the Zamboanga peninsula of Mindanao; the Maranaos, who reside in the vicinity of Lake Lanao in the northwest Mindanao; and the Maguindanaoans, who make their home to the south of the Maranaos. Religiously and culturally, the Muslims have much more in common with the neighboring Malaysians and Indonesians than they do with their fellow Filipinos against whom they have waged a brutal independence struggle for a number of years.”

<sup>xlvii</sup> Isaacson, supra note 38: 192.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Ibid. The agreement provides for the following: (1) a permanent cessation of MNLF hostilities, (2) a creation of a peace and development council tasked with executing various projects throughout southern Philippines, (3) an incremental allowance of local powers including the administration of justice, taxation, law and order, and education, and (4) integration of MNLF guerillas into the Philippine security force.

Ibid.: 193.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Ibid.: 194.

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<sup>xlix</sup> Ibid.: 199.

<sup>l</sup> Ibid.: 200.

<sup>li</sup> “Rebel attacks only Strengthen U.S.-Philippine Ties,” STRATFOR, 20 February 2003, <http://www.stratfor.biz/Story.neo?storyId+210397&country> id=99 [9 April 2003]: 2.

<sup>lii</sup> Isaacson, *supra* note 38: 201.

<sup>liii</sup> Ibid.: 201-202.

<sup>liv</sup> Ibid.: 202-203.

<sup>lv</sup> ASG’s resume includes (1) bombing a cathedral killing seven and injuring 130, (2) massacring 45 on a bus, (3) killing 53 civilians in a raid of a coastal settlement (4) a bomb attack in Jolo killing 11 and injuring 70, and (5) bombs on two buses aboard a ferry killing 45. Ibid.: 203-204.

<sup>lvi</sup> Ibid.: 208-209.

<sup>lvii</sup> Ding Zhitao, “Beleaguered Economy of the Philippines,” Beijing Review (28 January 2002): 1.

<sup>lviii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>lix</sup> Ibid.: 2.

<sup>lx</sup> Ibid.

<sup>lxi</sup> National Intelligence Council, Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue about the Future with Nongovernmental Experts (Washington, DC: 2000): 63.

<sup>lxii</sup> Global Trends 2015 defines pernicious globalization as “[g]lobal elites thrive, but the majority of the world’s population fails to benefit from globalization. **Population growth and resource scarcities** place heavy burdens on many developing countries, and migration becomes a major source of interstate tension. **Technologies** not only fail to address the problems of developing countries but also are exploited by negative and illicit networks and incorporated into destabilizing weapons. The global **economy** splits into three: growth continues in developed countries; many developing countries experience low negative per capita growth, resulting in a growing gap with the developed world; and the illicit economy grows dramatically. **Governance** and political leadership are weak at both the national and international levels. Internal **conflicts** increase, fueled by frustrated expectations, inequities, and heightened communal tensions; WMD proliferate and are used in at least one internal conflict.” Ibid.: 83-84.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Hopefully subsequent history will demonstrate that the Estrada matter was an example of a firmly entrenched democracy in the Philippines and that the successful transfer of power after the resignation is testament to a strong system.

<sup>lxiv</sup> Joint Statement, “President George W. Bush and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the U.S.-Philippine Alliance,” Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents (26 November 2001): 1697.

<sup>lxv</sup> I am not convinced that the converse, larger and/or bigger is always better, has been completely removed from many offices of power throughout the Pentagon.

<sup>lxvi</sup> One could argue that the opposite happened in Somalia. The force there was generally small and requests for larger assets were turned down. Although casualties were significant and U.S. resolve was weakened in dramatic fashion, for the most part a larger force will increase the chances of even greater numbers of casualties. The large death toll in Lebanon in the 1983 is an example of a relatively large and vulnerable force.

<sup>lxvii</sup> Arguably, a significant presence conflicts with Philippine law and the underlying independence and legitimacy of the country.

<sup>lxviii</sup> The current Philippine President has announced that she will not run for re-election; however, her political ambitions and future remain somewhat less than certain.

<sup>lxix</sup> Deidra Sheehan, “Swords into Ploughshares,” Far Eastern Economic Review, 37 (20 September 2001): 30.

<sup>lxx</sup> Ibid.

<sup>lxxi</sup> This broad view of what it takes to win was essential to the El Salvador effort as well: “[w]hile we extol the military-to-military success, we should remember that the six MILGP [U.S. Military Group] Commanders, the dozens of Operational Planning assistance and Training Teams (OPATTs), the scores of Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) and hundreds of others who served in El Salvador were but one element of a set of comprehensive policy tools in the hands of the four exceptionally talented Ambassadors who led the Country Team from 1981 through the close of the conflict in 1991.” John Waghelstein, “Military-to-Military Contacts: Personal Observation-the El Salvador Case,” unpublished manuscript (Fall 2002): 3. Likewise, another author adds: “[t]he key players in the US government in country were the ambassador

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and his Country Team with a strongly unified effort among the political sections, the Military Group, the Defense Attaché Office, USAID, and elements of the CIA station. Fully supporting this effort was the United States Southern Command and interagency activities in Washington.” Fishel, *supra* note 43: 386.

<sup>lxxii</sup> One exception to this rule, to the extent it applies or will apply in the Philippines, is reform of the Philippine military would require a significant U.S. military role.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> This applies to support for the Philippine reform and goodwill efforts.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Conversely, one author is convinced that “it would probably be fair to suggest that the ASG’s illicit acts are integral to, rather than independent of, a higher political-religious Islamic cause.” Isaacson, *supra* note 38: 204. On the other hand, one must appreciate that the population of southern Philippines is more concerned about economic, political, and social imbalances than the presence of U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia and other Jihad-inspired rallying points.

<sup>lxxv</sup> Waghelstein, *supra* note 71: 9.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> *Ibid.* Professor Waghelstein recounts an interview he had with Luis Taruc, the leader of the Huk insurgency in the Philippines in the 1950s, and highlights that Taruc believed “a system of bounties and rewards further undermined the insurgents. Taruc said many veteran insurgent leaders took advantage of the amnesty and bounties program and turned themselves in-often with weapons, information and followers,-with devastating impact on the morale of those still in the field.”

<sup>lxxvii</sup> Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia, each with Muslim majorities in the Philippines’ backyard, are nearby and problematic as breeding grounds for militant Islam.

<sup>lxxviii</sup> Most prominently, the Philippines allows a U.S. military presence while others in the area have denied the U.S. military a significant presence, the U.S. military has a great deal of experience in the Philippines, and the Philippines is in an ideal location geographically.

<sup>lxxix</sup> The force itself should remain primarily noncombatant and in the hundreds rather than the thousands.